

To: Kluesner, Dave[kluesner.dave@epa.gov]
From: Judith S. Weis
Sent: Fri 1/3/2014 7:40:03 PM
Subject: Re: Opinion piece: Passaic River's best chance at a cleanup: Opinion

I assume if they were planning a THOROUGH cleanup and adding on the aquaculture project merely out of the goodness of their hearts, they would not be getting criticized.

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> http://blog.nj.com/njv_guest_blog/2014/01/passaic_rivers_best_chance_at.html#incart_river_default
>
> Passaic River's best chance at a cleanup: Opinion
> [passaic-river-cleanup.jpg]
> Part of the old Diamond Shamrock site in Newark was covered in concrete
> and made to look like a park after Agent Orange was found to have
> contaminated the river and part of the shore. (Tony Kurdzuk/The
> Star-Ledger)
>
> [Star-Ledger Guest
> Columnist]<<http://connect.nj.com/staff/njoslguest/index.html>>By
> Star-Ledger Guest Columnist
> <<http://connect.nj.com/staff/njoslguest/posts.html>> The Star-Ledger
> Follow on Twitter<https://twitter.com/NJ_Voices>
> on January 03, 2014 at 7:02 AM, updated January 03, 2014 at 7:06 AM
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> By Jonathan Jaffe
> The history of sediment contamination in the lower Passaic River in many
> important ways begins and ends with the illegal dumping of Agent Orange
> byproducts at the former Diamond Alkali site on Lister Avenue in
> Newark<<http://www.epa.gov/r02earth/superfund/npl/diamondalkali/>>.
> Without the dioxin from this facility, the Lower Passaic would resemble
> many urban waterways - in need of cleanup, but probably not qualifying as
> one of the most heavily contaminated waterways in the nation.
> After taking some limited cleanup action, the parties responsible for this
> contamination - Tierra Solutions, Maxus Energy Corp. and Occidental
> Chemical Corp. - have effectively disappeared. They defied an order from
> the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to fund a recent dioxin removal
> project near Lyndhurst and show no signs of moving forward on additional
> cleanup action at the Lister Avenue site or anywhere else.
> Fortunately, a group of companies unrelated to the Lister Avenue trio has
> stepped forward and spent tens of millions of dollars to study and better
> understand the river so that an effective cleanup solution can be
>
> identified<http://www.nj.com/politics/index.ssf/2013/12/nj_judge_approves_165_million_settlement_in_passaic_river_pollution_case.html>.
> This group, known as the Lower Passaic River Cooperating Parties Group, is
> now completing the removal of contaminated sediment at river mile 10.9,
> adjacent to a park in Lyndhurst.
> After performing and analyzing an extensive study under EPA oversight, the
> CPG has identified a "Sustainable Remedy" as the best hope for real
> improvement in the lower Passaic. This remedy would combine surface
> sediment removal to achieve EPA targets for human health risk with
> community-based projects designed to reduce risk even further and faster,
> as well as addressing ongoing sources of river pollution.

- > It was perplexing to see a few misinformed individuals recently attack one
- > of these community-based projects - a Newark-based aquaponics program.
- > This program is an innovative way to significantly decrease human health
- > risk in the short term, while the river undergoes an extensive, targeted
- > remediation.
- > A group has identified a "sustainable remedy" as the best hope for real
- > improvement in the lower Passaic.
- > This one-year pilot program, to be implemented in concert with a large,
- > local church, a leading academic institution and many other local
- > partners, would hire and train unemployed veterans to operate a fish farm
- > and vegetable garden at what is now a vacant building in Newark.
- > This "closed loop," sustainable system would use waste from the fish
- > raised there to fertilize hydroponic vegetable gardens. Similar to
- > programs the EPA is considering for other rivers, these clean fish would
- > be exchanged for contaminated fish now being caught in the Lower Passaic
- > and eaten.
- > Consumption of contaminated fish has been identified by the EPA as the
- > leading source of human health risk in the lower Passaic. Besides reducing
- > risk, the aquaponics program would be a healthy food source to areas along
- > the river where it is often lacking.
- > Contrary to the clearly stated intentions of the Sustainable Remedy, which
- > focuses mostly on an aggressive program to remove contaminated sediment
- > from the river, some have mischaracterized this aquaponics program as a
- > substitute for sediment removal. Nothing could be further from the truth.
- > There is no doubt the lower Passaic needs smart, effective action to
- > remove dioxin-contaminated sediment. It also needs a measured and rational
- > consideration of the kind of holistic approach to restoring the health of
- > the river that is embodied in the Sustainable Remedy.
- > In order for this improvement to occur, the parties that repeatedly dumped
- > Agent Orange byproducts into the river must be held accountable for the
- > pollution they caused. Once that happens, there will be real hope for
- > implementing the kind of lasting solution that river communities and the
- > CPG have worked toward for so long.
- > Jonathan Jaffe is a spokesman for the CPG (LowerPassaicCPG.com),
- > comprising companies committed to a cleaner and healthier Lower Passaic.
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